

**BOROUGH OF WILKINSBURG COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Planning Session**  
**January 7, 2009**

**CALL TO ORDER**

President Moore called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 PM in Council Chambers, second floor of the Municipal Building, 605 Ross Ave., Wilkinsburg, PA.

**ROLL CALL**

The roll was called to establish a quorum. Present were: Ms. Edwards, Ms. Evans, Ms. Trice, Mr. Cohn, Mr. Lewis, Ms. McCarthy-Johnson and President Moore. Also in attendance were Mayor John Thompson and Marla P. Marcinko, Borough Manager. Ms. Ervin arrived at approximately 7:09 PM. Ms. Nicholas was absent. A quorum was established.

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Moore requested that the audience observe a moment of silence and Mayor Thompson noted that this was being observed in recognition of Edward Amos, Planning Commission Chairperson who passed away December 24, 2008. Mr. Amos was a long-time, committed volunteer in the community of Wilkinsburg.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Kate Luxemburg – 432 Rebecca Ave.** – Ms. Luxemburg provided copies of photographs to Council depicting garbage cans in front of the house across from her home. Ms. Luxemburg requested that individuals be cited that violate the Ordinance which requires that trash receptacles to be kept out of view and stated that the fines would pay for enforcement.

**Pamela Macklin – 1420 Marlboro Ave.** – Thanked Council for recognizing the passing of Mr. Amos. Ms. Macklin advised that the Planning Commission met on January 5, 2009 and elected new officers. Ms. Macklin will serve as Chairperson, Tina Stevenson will serve as Vice-President and Patrick Shattuck will serve as Secretary. Ms. Macklin cited several concerns of the Planning Commission: approval of a contract for payment to the consultants who are working on the Comprehensive Plan which did not come before the entire Commission for action; Vacant Property Recovery Program applications not coming through the Commission for approval; and, concerns about the lack of new information coming from the Comprehensive Plan/Business District Revitalization Plan process and the apparent lack of resident participation. Ms. Macklin will put these concerns in writing and forward to the Borough Manager for clarification.

**Barbara Witherspoon - 1736 Wright St.** – Ms. Witherspoon spoke in support of the removal of the tree on Foliage St. Ms. Marcinko responded that the Borough's arborist will be inspecting the tree and providing a recommendation. Additionally, Urban Tree Forge has inspected the tree and is obtaining pricing for its removal.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

### **09-001 Neighborhood Stabilization Program Concurring Resolution**

**Moved:** Mr. Cohn

**Second:** Ms. McCarthy-Johnson

Ms. Trice inquired as to who compiled the list of properties proposed for demolition. Ms. Marcinko responded that Council had previously authorized, at the December 17, 2008 meeting, the application for funds in the amount of \$400,000 which included forty-three (43) sites. The sites were identified by the Borough Engineer and were on the Abandoned Structures Inventory, which was prioritized, based upon condition. It was subsequently determined that the Neighborhood Stabilization Program monies are only awarded based upon activities/demolitions that are occurring in an area that has been designated for redevelopment or is currently under redevelopment. Ms. Evans and Mr. Cohn went out and looked in those areas and added additional sites.

Mr. Cohn commented he took some structures off of the list because they were occupied, even though they were tax delinquent. There are significant funds available under this program and there is great need in Wilkinsburg.

Ms. Trice commented there are approximately six high priority structures on the proposed list and a number of low priority structures. Ms. Trice questioned the justification for a house on Brashear which is not tax delinquent. Ms. Evans responded that the structure is adjacent to the Peebles Square Project and condemned and further advised that virtually all of the properties are tax delinquent. Ms. Edwards questioned if a public hearing would be held and expressed concern that most of the properties being proposed for demolition are located in the second ward and that the other wards of the Borough, particularly the first ward, are also deserving of attention. Ms. Evans reiterated that the Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grant requires that the demolition take place in an area currently under redevelopment or proposed for redevelopment in the next six months.

Mayor Thompson requested confirmation that, in order to make application for the NSP monies, redevelopment activity in the area had to be underway. Ms. Marcinko and Ms. Evans responded affirmatively. Ms. Marcinko advised that the approving resolution must be to the TCVCOG office no later than tomorrow, 1/8/09. Ms. Evans cited that Wilkinsburg's eligibility is very high for this program.

**Yes:** Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, Mr. Lewis, Mr. Cohn, Ms. Trice, Ms. Evans, Ms. Ervin, Ms. Edwards, President Moore.

**Motion carried**

Ms. Edwards advised that there is pending legislation introduced by County Councilwoman Amanda Greene, which would outlaw the practice of discrimination against people based upon sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Within Allegheny County, people have been discriminated against for housing and jobs as a result of their sexual orientation. A Public Hearing on this legislation will be held January 15, 2009 in the Gold Room of the City County Building. Ms. Edwards requested a resolution of support for this legislation.

**Moved:** Ms. Edwards

**Second:** Mr. Cohn

**Yes:** Ms. Ervin, Ms. Evans, Ms. Trice, Mr. Cohn, Mr. Lewis, Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, Ms. Edwards, President Moore.

**Motion carried**

Mr. Lewis requested Council President Moore impose a time limit for elected officials when presenting their reports.

**REPORT FROM THE MAYOR:**

**Mayor Thompson** reported:

- Forty-nine (49) arrests in the month of December:
  - Three (3) DUI
  - Six (6) drug arrests
  - Six (6) aggravated assaults
  - Six (6) warrants
  - Seven (7) trespassing
  - Five (5) thefts
  - Four (4) disorderly conducts
  - Two (2) public drunkenness
  - Two (2) retail thefts
  - Two (2) robberies
  - One (1) weapons charge
  - One (1) simple assault charge
  - One (1) citation
  - One (1) burglary
- Officer Balocik has completed his weight master training. This training provides the officer knowledge to identify trucks that are overweight traveling through the community.
- Officer Yuhouse is the Fire Range Master and everyone has qualified, including Chief Coleman, for firearms with the exception of Sgt. Morrison and Sgt. Walsh,

who are both off on disability. Officer Yuhouse has volunteered to clean out the firing range in the basement to see what can be salvaged.

- Manpower in the department shows Sgt. Morrison is still off, and Officer Waz is off for foot surgery and expected back on January 19, 2009.
- A Calendar of Events was presented by Mayor Thompson for the year 2009.
- A check in the amount of \$10,000 was received from PNC Bank toward the Borough's local share for the Main Street Program.
- A march will be held on January 19, 2009 for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. It will begin at the Church of the Nazarene, 300 Peebles St., continue through the business district and end at Deliverance Baptist Church.

### **REPORT FROM COUNCIL PRESIDENT**

President Moore requested an executive session to discuss personnel issues.

President Moore commented on a vision of Wilkinsburg as a green, healthy, safe and clean community. To help deliver the vision, the focus should be on improved community, the development of facilities, activities and a safe environment for children and young people, meeting decent home standards, developing recycling and waste management programs and improving tax collection rates. In focusing on values, it will influence how we go about delivering our priorities. As local authorities we have three overarching roles; service provider, community leaders and a corporate body. As a service provider we will aspire to excellence in service delivery in a sustainable way and with more efficient means of operation. As community leaders, we will help engage with our residents to encourage and promote democratic decision-making, promote equality and community cohesiveness. As a corporate body, we will promote good employment service, positive employee relationships, and effective employee development. We must manage change and respond effectively and efficiently to new demands placed upon us. We must work together as a single corporate entity to ensure the highest standards in the conduct of our business. Our business shall be conducted openly and transparently. We need to be innovative and open to new ideas and ways of working together. We need to seek out and develop partnerships with others to do service where it makes sense to do so.

#### **Adult Library Report:**

- The Library thanks all who use the ABITIBI recycling container. 12.4 tons of paper was recycled in 2008. This exceeds the 2007 amount by 1.5 tons.
- The Library will be closed January 17-19, 2009 in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday.

### **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

**Economic Development Committee** – Ms. Evans reported:

- The Borough has contracted with the Office of Public Art through a grant from The Heinz Endowments to assist with the development and implementation of a

Public Art Review Process for the Borough. The Committee will hold a kick off meeting on Wednesday January 14, 2009 at Hosanna House from 6-8:00 PM.

- A public open house for the Comprehensive Plan/Business District Revitalization Plan will be held on January 28, 2009 at Hosanna House from 6-8 PM.

**Finance Committee** – Mr. Cohn reported:

- The next Finance Committee meeting will be held on January 8, 2009.

### **REPORT FROM BOROUGH MANAGER**

Ms. Marcinko advised that a recommendation has been received from the Engineer for the removal of certain signalized intersections and conversion to four-way stop intersections. The locations are: South and Center, Ross and Center, Rebecca and Center, Trenton and South, Coal and South and Mulberry and Rebecca. It is anticipated that the Borough could save approximately \$105,600 per year on electric costs with this conversion. Council concurred with the recommendation of the Engineer. The amending ordinance will be prepared and authorized for advertisement at the Council meeting on January 21, 2009.

Ms. Marcinko announced that the Wilkesburg Ministerial Association will be hosting the Martin Luther King, Jr. march on January 19, 2009 at 10:00 AM with a rededication service to follow at 11:00 AM at Deliverance Baptist Church. The Association has requested Council's attendance and would like a representative to speak at the service. President Moore volunteered to do so.

A motion was made by Mr. Lewis, second by Ms. Edwards, that the meetings of the standing committees of Council be advertised and open to the public.

**Yes:** Mr. Lewis, Ms. Trice, Ms. Ervin, Ms. Edwards.

**No:** Ms. McCarthy-Johnson, Mr. Cohn, Ms. Evans, President Moore.

Mr. Cohn expressed that the reason he voted against the motion is his understanding that the structure of the standing committees rests with the Council President.

With the vote being 4:4, Mayor Thompson was asked to break the tie. Mayor Thompson voted against the motion.

**Motion failed 4:5**

Council recessed to executive session at approximately 8:08 PM upon the prior request of President Moore.

Council came out of executive session at approximately 9:35 PM and the meeting reconvened.

A motion was made by Mr. Cohn, second by Ms. Evans, to uphold the suspension and terminate the employment of LeRoy Hicks, AID Team Coordinator, effective immediately.

**Yes:** Ms. Evans, Mr. Cohn, President Moore.

**No:** Ms. Ervin, Ms. Trice, Mr. Lewis, Ms. Edwards.

**Abstain:** Ms. McCarthy-Johnson

**Motion failed: 3:4 with one abstention**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Council moved to adjourn at approximately 9:40 PM.

**Moved:** Mr. Lewis

**Second:** Ms. Edwards

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Eugenia Moore, Council President